

Fisheries Habitat Workgroup
Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2014
2:00 – 5:00 pm

In attendance: *Workgroup Members:* Robert T. Brown, MWA; John Page Williams, CBF; Micah Dunmeyer, SFAC; Roger Trageser, MD Bass Nation; Jim Gracie, SFAC; Eric Schott, UMES – IMET; Andy Lazur, UMD Extension; Phil Langley, SFAC; Bob Abele, CFAC; Tom O'Connell, MD DNR FS; Margaret McGinty, MD DNR FS; *Presenters:* Alan Heft, MD DNR FS; Jim Uphoff, MD DNR FS; Marek Topolski, MD DNR FS; *Interested Partners:* Helen Steward, DNR IPR; Lee Karrh, DNR, RAS; Victoria Brown, MWA; Nancy Butowski, MD DNR FS; Sarah Widman, MD DNR FS; Matt Lawrence, MD DNR FS; Thomas Brown, Vice chair Calvert County Environmental Commission

Welcome: Tom O'Connell began the meeting at 2:15pm. (We delayed to accommodate folks caught in a traffic closure).

Tom described why Fisheries was interested in forming this committee, when there are multiple agencies managing fisheries. He recognized that fisheries resources are diminishing as habitat impacts increase, and suggested that fishermen and fisheries need to engage more in the land management. He suggested our role should support communicating habitat science to our constituents, so they are equipped to advocate for fish habitat conservation at the local level.

Tom illustrated the impacts of habitat using a series of pie graphs. The pie represents the capacity of the resource (number of fish). Commercial and Recreational constituents each seek a piece of the pie. Habitat impacts are causing the pie to shrink in size. His vision is that all constituents would work together to address habitat impacts and increase fishing capacity (make the pie bigger).

The original motion to form a workgroup to address habitat came from the SFAC. Other commissions also voiced habitat concerns. This led to logical decision to form workgroup made up of representative of all advisory bodies.

Jim Gracie and Tom agreed to facilitate the first meeting, with the understanding that the workgroup would elect a chair at this meeting or the next.

ACTION: WORKGROUP ELECT A CHAIR AT MAY MEETING.

Introductions: The workgroup members introduced themselves and gave a brief background on their interests or experiences in habitat concerns or work. Interests focused on Trout, Bass, Crabs and Oysters, with several workgroup members mentioning the impact of changing landscapes on habitat. Other habitat concerns included low oxygen and SAV loss in tidal waters. Several members mentioned the need to educate and build collaborative partnerships to heighten awareness of fish habitat conservation needs in order to influence sound land use decisions.

ACTION: DEVELOP A MATRIX IDENTIFYING SPECIES AND HABITATS OF CONCERN. (MM WILL SEND THIS OUT ASKING WORKGROUP MEMBERS AND INTERESTED PARTIES TO ADD TO IT.)

Presentations: Alan Heft gave a brief history of Brook Trout in Maryland. He cited habitat as the largest threat to managing sustainable populations. He discussed the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, describing the program focus and goals. He then discussed the status of Brook Trout in Maryland, where 2% of the population is considered fully intact and 57% extirpated. He cited multiple stressors that fall under two overarching themes, land use and climate. Alan then described the process they have adopted to engage volunteers in assisting in restoration and conservation of Brook Trout habitat.

Jim Uphoff began his presentation by highlighting some habitat management that has worked along the Atlantic Coast. He showed some study results suggesting that agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) may have

helped in recovery of Striped Bass in the Bay. He then described results of various studies that show how various fish and their life stages are being impacted in urban areas. He demonstrated loss of spawning habitat, reduced larval presence, reduced presence of juveniles and adults, and reduced presence of larger (quality) White Perch. All these factors translate to loss in fisheries. Jim then discussed how his group is applying this information in the management context and their experience and observations in working with a local government.

Marek Topolski described the work that the Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership is doing to address habitat loss along the coast. This group falls under the umbrella of the National Fish Habitat Partnership and is made up of state, local and nonprofit groups along the coast. The focus to date has been on promoting restoration of in-water habitat to remove barrier to migration and improve submersed habitat for target species.

Workgroup members requested we post the presentations.

ACTION: MM WILL WORK WITH FISHERIES STAFF TO DEVELOP A WEB SITE FOR THE COMMITTEE AND POST THE PRESENTATIONS. MM WILL EMAIL THE GROUP WHEN IT IS AVAILABLE.

Group Discussion: The workgroup members discussed potential goals. Two goals seemed to emerge, restoration and conservation. While these goals are not mutually exclusive, there are different pathways to meeting them. Most agreed that the group should focus on addressing land use impacts to promote conservation. Jim G. asked MM to send out the draft version and asked workgroup members to read and comment on it. The group will discuss and finalize the vision/goal at the next workgroup meeting. Margaret asked workgroup members to send information to her about watershed groups and other alliances that may be target partners for our efforts.

ACTION: MM SEND DRAFT VISION. WORKGROUP MEMBERS SEND INFORMATION ABOUT WATERSHED GROUPS AND OTHER ALLIANCES TO MM.

The workgroup discussed meeting frequency and determined to meet monthly.

THE NEXT WORKGROUP MEETING WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 14TH FROM 2-5PM, IN ANNAPOLIS.